Decline in Foodgrain Production

*510. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that foodgrain production for 2000-01 was estimated at 199.02 million tonnes, showing a decline of 4.7 per cent, during the current Agriculture Year, in comparison to last year; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons for the decline in production during 2000-01?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) According to the third advance estimates, foodgrains production during 2000-01 is likely to be 196.13 million tonnes as against the final estimates of 208.87 million tonnes for 1999-2000. Thus, the foodgrains production is expected to decline by 6.1% during the current agriculture year. This being advance estimates for 2000-01, it is subject to revision after agriculture year is over. The decline in foodgrains production during 2000-01 is expected mainly due to aberrant weather conditions in certain States like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan etc. Such annual fluctuation in agriculture is not an unusual phenomenon. However, the foodgrains production in India shows a long term upward trend.

Formation of the Rail-Tel Corporation

*511. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways, proposed ambitious optic fibre cable network business plan, including formation of a Rail-Tel Corporation and commercial exploitation of right of way by leasing optic fibre cables along entire length of 62,800 kilometers of rail track, has been placed before a Group of Ministers for review and taking decision; and

(b) if so, the salient features of the plan, Rail-tel Corporation equity participation etc. and by when the proposal would be given clearance?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) Based on Cabinet approval, Railways have already formed a corporation called RailTel Corporation of India Limited. This Corporation will lay optic fibre cable along the railway track progressively to establish a nationwide optic fibre cable based telecom network to fulfil railways' communications needs and also commercially exploit surplus telecom capacity. Presently, it is a 100% Railway owned Corporation under Ministry of Railways. Cabinet has been approached for approval of induction of Joint Venture partner(s) in Rail-Tel Corporation of India Limited. The Cabinet has referred the issue of induction of Joint Venture partner(s) in Rail-Tel Corporation of India Limited to Group of Ministers for recommendation and further approval of Cabinet.

Grading System in Schools

*512. SHRI V.P. DURAISAMY: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that CBSE is planning to replace the current evaluation system with a grading system to reduce post result trauma;

(b) if so, the deails thereof;

(c) whether views of the educationists and school authorities have been taken into account while formulating this proposal;

(d) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(e) by when the new scheme comes into existence?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) Yes, Sir. It is proposed presently at Class X level.

(b) The CBSE's current evaluation system in declaration of results in Class X indicates both grades and marks. The proposed system envisages issue of subject-wise grades without reference to marks.

(c) and (d) Discussions and consultations have been held by the CBSE with various schools, teaching community, educationists, State